



Criminal Division

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**REMARKS* TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
DOMESTIC TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION**

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*Mr. Wray frequently speaks from notes and may depart from the speech as prepared.

Thanks for the introduction. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to all of you at this important and timely conference. Over the past two days, you've received a wealth of information about human trafficking and have shared with us, and with each other, your own insights and experiences about this criminal phenomenon's impact in your communities. My hope is that, as we head home, we do so with heightened awareness, a strong sense of purpose, and a commitment to join forces to confront this pernicious evil.

Traffickers prey on the most vulnerable members of society – young children, runaway or throwaway adolescents, undocumented migrants with little education and few language skills – and despicably treat them as commodities that can be used and discarded. The trafficker's tools include deception, violence, intimidation, isolation, and fear. We're the last, and only, hope these victims have.

Trafficking in persons typically involves a continuum of criminal conduct that occurs over time, in different places. It can be purely domestic or transnational in scope. In either case, the results and the impact of the crime are felt here at home, right in our backyards. Whether the victim was plucked or lured from a home in the U.S. or from a home in Thailand, if she ends up on our streets and in our communities, abused and victimized here, she's a domestic trafficking victim whom we need to rescue and protect. While the criminal conduct of traffickers may start outside the U.S., it certainly doesn't end there.

At one end of that continuum, transnational trafficking networks may recruit victims in one country and have them transit several others on their way to the U.S. After the network brings the victims into the U.S. illegally, it may sell them to middlemen or supply them directly to an end user. That end user could be a brothel in Phoenix, a strip club in Tampa, or a home in New Jersey. The trafficking network may even own and operate the brothel or strip club. Some end users themselves may be affiliated with each other, trading and exchanging their victims.

Along the way, the trafficking of humans into the U.S. is facilitated by alien smugglers, false document vendors, and the like. In many source and transit countries, corrupt public officials become willing accomplices or even full-fledged members of trafficking organizations. Often, the smugglers who bring trafficking victims into the U.S. control their cargo with brutal efficiency.

The end of that continuum, the victims' final destination – be it a strip club, a brothel, a migrant slave camp or a sweatshop – is the facet of trafficking that you're most likely to see. Your mission is to recognize and rescue those victims and to bring the users or consumers to justice. But our combined responsibility goes further, to the

whole continuum.

If we disrupt only the end stages of a trafficking scheme, that disruption can be merely an inconvenience, rather than a death blow, to the organization itself. Unless we dismantle the entire trafficking network, including its financial structure, the network may simply absorb the loss and relocate the illicit business or reopen, using a new set of victims.

Many of you have already seen this time and time again in the context of other organized crime, like drug trafficking or gun violence. We've learned, for example, that we can't just take down the neighborhood heroin dealer and expect to control the drug problem in our community. We also need to identify and take down his supplier, and that person's supplier, and so on. Through decades of experience in fighting drug crime, we've developed a strategy of identifying and dismantling the entire criminal enterprise. That strategy has been executed through close partnerships among local, state, and federal law enforcement, community leaders, and victim advocates. In short, we've learned that, by working together and targeting the organization at all levels, we stand the best chance of succeeding. The strategy works in fighting narco-trafficking; now we need to apply it to human trafficking.

Your offices probably participate in some of the most successful examples of this approach: the High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Forces, known as HIDTA, and the Project Safe Neighborhoods partnerships. HIDTA combines the expertise of local, state, and federal agencies to reduce the impact of drug trafficking through unified, multifaceted initiatives. By working together and sharing their skills and intelligence, participating agencies have scored victories through HIDTA that they could never have won alone. Together, they set their sights on some of the most dangerous and well-organized trafficking organizations, for maximum impact in their own regions and communities. In order to hit the traffickers where it hurts, HIDTA partners are now working with others to hit higher levels of their networks – the wholesale distributors and the command-and-control targets – in order to eliminate entire supply and distribution chains, rather than reaching only the end product on the street.

Project Safe Neighborhoods presents more powerful proof of the value of partnerships among local, state, and federal law enforcement and community organizations. All across the country, these partners are joining forces to reduce gun crime by pursuing a common strategy: targeting the most violent offenders for prosecution and taking them off the streets. At the very same time, other PSN partners are implementing measures in their communities aimed at prevention, deterrence, and rehabilitation.

I strongly believe that forging a similar, systematic alliance to fight human trafficking can lead to great success. We've heard in this conference how such partnerships are now being forged, both formally and informally. Even where no formal partnerships exist, many of you have learned on your own that the partnered approach is the better one. Simply put, together we can do more.

Consider the case out of Dallas that was highlighted earlier in the video you saw yesterday, I believe. Molina, a Honduran national, ran a network that lured Central and South American girls as young as eleven to Texas and forced them into prostitution. Only a truly coordinated effort, both domestically and internationally, could have rescued these victims *and* brought all of their oppressors to justice. You heard Officer Holmes of the Dallas Police say that he recognized early on, due to the age of the victims, that "this wasn't just a prostitution ring." As the joint local-state-federal investigation progressed, officers determined that they'd need to execute *thirteen* separate search warrants simultaneously in order to get a fully successful takedown. This required the combined manpower of over 200 local, state, and federal officers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Molina and five of his lieutenants eventually pled guilty and got sentences between 1½ and 6 years in prison each.

But the cooperation didn't stop there: Investigators worked closely with Honduran authorities, who have now charged other members of the trafficking network there. This is my favorite kind of story, where we can give thanks not only for the victims we've rescued, but also for those girls whom we've saved from ever becoming trafficking victims in the first place, because of our combined efforts.

The strategic approach that I've talked about – identifying and dismantling the larger criminal organization – begins, as it must, with the rescue of trafficking victims and the prosecution of trafficking consumers in your communities. Those people are the keys to identifying the larger network. They can lead to a treasure trove of valuable information about the network's facilitators, smuggling routes, size and scope, and other potential victims brought into the U.S. whom we can – and must – rescue.

While these victim-witnesses will likely provide only bits and pieces of information, like first names or nicknames and general descriptions, those kernels of information can suddenly become a whole lot more meaningful when married with information provided by other victims across the country. Working together to collect and share this information is critical to our success as a Nation in combating this scourge. When we fight this or any other organized crime, we'll end up having only a limited impact if we act alone. When we work together – sharing information, resources, experiences, and ideas – we're a force to be reckoned with. Just as our enemy has organized itself and formed cooperative networks, we've got to do the same.

Arm a state labor inspector with the knowledge that employees at a certain work site are controlled by a violent Albanian organized crime group, and you can be sure he'll look more closely and dig a little deeper. The suspicions harbored by federal immigration officials that a Thai alien smuggler might be coercing women into prostitution in Chicago might save lives if shared with local Chicago police. This sharing of information increases our strength and better focuses our resources.

Stopping the Crime Earlier

This kind of cohesive approach will obviously enhance our efforts to prosecute traffickers who commit these crimes. But more importantly, it will also help us stop the crime of trafficking *before* it happens. Just as we'd much rather catch terrorists before they strike than after – with their hands on a check instead of a bomb – we'd rather stop traffickers from bringing potential slaves into the U.S. in the first place, instead of finding them locked in some warehouse in Houston. Better intelligence and better training will help us identify traffickers before they exploit more victims. This is especially important since, remarkably often, trafficking victims don't know their intended fate until it's thrust upon them. They go with the trafficker voluntarily, expecting something very different than what they get.

Tending to the Victims

On that note, my remarks wouldn't be complete if I didn't stress the importance of careful attention to, and care for, your trafficking victims. Common decency requires it. Fortunately, the right thing to do also tends to be best for your prosecution. In the typical trafficking case, the victims are your best witnesses. Sometimes, they may be your only witnesses. They may be severely traumatized, both physically and psychologically. How you treat them could make or break your case.

That makes it all the more critical both to you and to your victims that your task forces include victim service providers, both public and private. They've got the experience, the ability, and the will to help you tend to your victims.

Child Prostitution

And those victims don't fit a single profile. Trafficking victims come from different places, speak different languages, have different cultural backgrounds and needs, and will certainly present different challenges. The plight of many of these victims can't help but tug at the heartstrings of even the most hardened street cop. Finding a nine-year-old girl in a prostitution raid or locked in a basement as a domestic slave is something no investigator is likely to forget. Under state and federal law, of course, it's impossible for a nine-year-old child to consent to prostitution or servitude.

But what about the sixteen-year-old girl on the street involved in prostitution –

perhaps dependent on a drug habit, and seemingly loyal to her pimp? The Trafficking Victims Protection Act correctly tells us that she can't consent to the prostitution either. Her pimp is a trafficker. He uses the very same techniques to lure, control, and direct the child that other traffickers use to lure and keep foreign trafficking victims in a condition of servitude. As with her foreign counterparts, the sixteen-year-old girl was likely selected because she was uniquely vulnerable to manipulation.

The tough exterior of that sixteen-year-old being prostituted by her pimp may actually be the psychological defense of a scared runaway who was lured by traffickers with promises of a modeling career. That drug habit may in fact have been induced by the traffickers as a means of control. Her apparent volition may be the result of more beatings, threats, and sexual assaults than she can even remember.

No matter what she's been led to believe, she's a victim of human trafficking, too. In our efforts to eliminate the scourge of human trafficking from outside our borders, we can't forget our *own* children whose bodies are being bought and sold in the sex trade in our very own communities. We need to look beyond the hardened front that some of these children present. We need to look past the drug addiction. We need to recognize the vulnerable kids whose situations in life made them ripe targets for this vile abuse. These children lost hope long ago of being rescued. It's our challenge to break through that tough shell and show them that we care – to demonstrate to them that we know that their innocence and futures have been robbed. We need to help them regain their lives and their dignity, and we need to put their traffickers behind bars – for a long, long time.

Our Toolbox

As I conclude, I want to draw your attention to our collective strengths. At the beginning of my remarks, I mentioned some of the tools of the trafficking trade: deception, violence, intimidation, isolation, and fear. I'm happy to point out that law enforcement has a few tools of its own, including electronic surveillance, undercover investigations, extradition, and potentially long prison terms for defendants convicted of trafficking in persons, hostage taking, or peonage.

We've got "boots on the ground" – FBI agents and DOJ prosecutors stationed in trafficking source countries who are engaged in the exchange of criminal intelligence and evidence, and committed to providing valuable training. These folks sometimes gain information about trafficking networks in the source countries that can prove critical to your domestic cases. The newly formed Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center, which the President mentioned earlier, will collect and analyze intelligence that we glean from source regions like Eastern Europe and Asia, and from transit countries between the source country and your districts.

Our efforts will also get a boost from the Trafficking Protocol to the U.N. Transnational Organized Crime Convention, an international initiative designed to organize and provide tools to dismantle entire trafficking networks. The Department has been working with the Senate to secure ratification of this protocol; the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has held a hearing and we're waiting on the votes of the committee and the full Senate. The Trafficking Protocol provides mechanisms for sharing trafficking information informally among police and formally between prosecutors for use as evidence at trial. It also provides a vehicle for extradition between countries with bilateral extradition treaties that don't cover trafficking in persons, and between countries that can extradite based on multilateral treaties.

Asset forfeiture is another powerful tool that deserves particular mention. Federal asset forfeiture laws allow us to confiscate the profits derived by traffickers from their trade in human misery. Needless to say, we shouldn't let them keep this money. Forfeiture laws also allow us to use these funds to finance our continued efforts against trafficking. As many of you probably know, federal law provides for sharing of these assets with state and local law enforcement when they participate in the case. There's a certain justice in taking profits made by human traffickers off the backs, innocence, and lives of helpless victims, and using that money to fund our combined efforts to put other traffickers out of business and behind bars.

Conclusion

We'll leave here today with a better idea of the nature and scale of the human trafficking problem. We all recognize better than ever that local, state, and federal authorities need to band together – hand in hand with victim service providers – to put an end to this depraved and vicious crime. Why? Because a civilized society cannot tolerate the existence of slavery. It's that simple.

That the President, the Attorney General, and so many senior officials are speaking at this conference is one measure of just how enormously important the fight against human trafficking is to all of us. But we know that you're the folks on the front lines. You're the ones who see the effects of trafficking in your city streets. You're the ones most likely to encounter the frightened runaway who's been trapped into a cycle of drugs, prostitution, and violence, or the scared foreign national toiling in a basement. And I'm sure it's not lost on you that in the eyes of many victims, you may represent the face of all law enforcement of the entire Government.

But you're not alone. In any way we can, we want to help you rescue these victims and lock up the lowlifes who preyed on them. There isn't a single Division or Section within the Department of Justice that isn't eager to support your efforts. For my part, as the head of the Department's Criminal Division, I offer you the full range of our

help, resources, and expertise – from our prosecutors expert in child exploitation crimes, to our prosecutors who devote themselves exclusively to dismantling and prosecuting the Mafia and other organized criminal syndicates, to our prosecutors devoted to alien smuggling, to our experts who negotiate with foreign countries to obtain evidence and witnesses and facilitate extradition of defendants, to our prosecutors stationed in source and transit countries. We all want to work with you to stamp out this despicable crime.

Thank you.